

Faith in Five – Adults Sacrament of the Sick



1. **The Sacrament of the Sick, (formally, Extreme Unction) also known as Anointing of the Sick** is a Sacrament that is given for the healing—bodily healing and spiritual healing—of a person who is seriously ill. It was once called Extreme Unction as it was given only to the dying, but the Church defines the renewed purpose of the sacrament as "the conferral of a special grace on the Christian experiencing the difficulties inherent in the condition of grave illness or old age" (CCC, 1527). The Anointing of the Sick helps us remember our need for spiritual and physical healing. Any Catholic who is seriously ill, advanced in age or needs the comfort of the Church's sacramental prayer life may be anointed. The sacrament should be administered as soon as it is realized a person may be in danger of death, rather than waiting for the last moment.

The person does not have to be dying to receive this sacrament. A careful judgment about the serious nature of the illness is sufficient. The Catechism says, "The anointing of the sick is not a sacrament for those only who are at the point of death. As soon as anyone of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive this sacrament has certainly already arrived" (CCC 1514).

2. The purpose of the Sacrament of the Sick is to bring about a healing—if it is God's will—bodily healing, but certainly spiritual healing—with the idea that the person may well then go on to live life and recover. The special grace of the Sacrament is to comfort and to strengthen the soul of the sick person, delivering hope:
 - "the uniting of the sick person to the passion of Christ, for his own good and that of the whole Church
 - the strengthening, peace, and courage to endure in a Christian manner the sufferings of illness or old age
 - the forgiveness of sins, if the sick person was not able to obtain it through the sacrament of Penance
 - the restoration of health if it is conducive to the salvation of his soul
 - the preparation for passing over to eternal life" (CCC 1532).
3. The sacrament, like the others, is a communal and liturgical celebration, and may take place in any setting, for a single individual or group of people (CCC, 1517). The sacrament is administered only by a bishop or priest. The community is invited to be present for ecclesial prayer and support. When one person suffers, all suffer. The sacrament is intended to address and heal the suffering of all, and to give us strength to depend on the goodness of God. This grace may give the sick person's family and friends peace and consolation, knowing eternal life awaits their beloved.
4. Anyone can pray for someone who is sick, but the Sacrament of the Sick can only be given to a person who has been baptized, since Baptism initiates a person into the life and grace of the liturgical Church (Canon #842).

5. **The scriptural basis for anointing of the sick :**
 - a. **James 5:14–15:** "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man. And the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him".
 - b. **Mark 6:13** – "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them".

6. A person can receive the sacrament as many times as needed throughout his or her life, and a person with a chronic illness might be anointed again if the disease worsens. Illness does not have to be physical; it can be mental, emotional or spiritual also. Those who are having impending surgery or with an illness may obtain the Sacrament of the sick at the parish. This may be done by appointment or after Mass.

7. **Oil of the Sick** is pure olive oil blessed by the bishop. It is one of the three Holy oils blessed by the bishop of the diocese on Holy Thursday morning, the other two Holy Oils being Holy Chrism and the Oil of Catechumens, used in Baptism. In the Roman Rite of the Latin Church, the priest anoints the sick person's forehead and hands with oil (usually in the form of a cross), saying: "Through this holy anointing, may the Lord in his love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up" (CCC 1513). He may also, in accordance with local culture and traditions, and the needs of the sick person, anoint other parts of the body, but without repeating the sacramental formula.

8. **Last Rites are not a sacrament**, but a group of sacraments, prayers and sacramental activities that are administered as someone is preparing to die, when it is evident that the person is dying or in the process of dying. These rites prepare the soul of a dying Catholic by absolution of sins, blessing with grace through anointing, and taking in the final communion. Last Rites are crucial for faithful Catholics because these are the final prayers and blessings before going to heaven. The administration of the Last Rites is a final cleansing, which prepares the dying to enter heaven as they have denounced their sinful nature. The most important part of the last rites is the reception of the Lord in one's final Communion, also called "**Viaticum**" (Latin: that which you take on the road, i.e., provisions for a journey) This special Communion prepares us to travel with the Lord on the final part of our journey.

9. The normal order of administration of these three sacraments to the dying is:
 - a. **Sacrament of Reconciliation** (if the dying person is physically unable to confess, absolution is given conditionally on the existence of contrition),
 - b. **Sacrament of the Sick** -Anointing of the Sick
 - c. **Sacrament of Holy Eucharist** - Viaticum

The rite includes the Apostle's Creed, Our Father and final blessing prayers. These three sacraments are also known as the "sacraments that prepare for our heavenly homeland" or the sacraments that complete the earthly pilgrimage (CCC 1525).

10. The way in which Last Rites are administered varies on the specific circumstances. The ritual will differ depending on whether or not the dying person is able to speak and in good standing with the Church. If the person is a non-Catholic, or is no longer a practicing Catholic, the priest may adjust the rites accordingly. The priest is there not to pass judgment, but to help guide and comfort the dying on their final journey.

In order for a non-baptized person to receive the last rites (including Anointing of the Sick), the following conditions must be met: be seriously ill and in danger of death, be convinced of the teaching of the Church, wish to be incorporated into the Church and desire the last rites. That person would first be baptized and confirmed, then anointed and lastly given the Eucharist as viaticum.

11. Only a living person can receive a sacrament, and the prayers that accompany the rituals of the Last Rites. One who has already deceased is not able to receive. As cited in this [source](#), "...[when]...the priest doesn't get to the dying person in time, [a] priest may administer the sacraments "conditionally." This may happen if the person has just expired or if there is any doubt that the person is truly dead. In cases like this, the priest will administer the sacraments with the assumption that the person is still alive. Most priests would do this if the apparent death happened within 20 or 30 minutes. But no one would anoint a corpse already in the morgue".
12. The **Apostolic Pardon** is a blessing with an indulgence that happens at the conclusion of the Sacrament of the Sick if the recipient is in danger of death. The Apostolic Pardon remits all temporal consequences associated with sin that has been confessed. While confession forgives the eternal punishment for sin, the indulgence attached to the Apostolic Pardon forgives temporal punishment due to sin. The granting of the apostolic blessing (or pardon) is not an automatic guarantee that no purgation is necessary. The usual conditions for obtaining a plenary indulgence apply - confession, Communion and (if possible, for the dying) prayer for the intention of the pontiff. It is further required that all attachment to sin, even venial sin, be absent. ([Source](#)).
13. Family members may request the sacrament on behalf of the sick if they cannot request it for themselves. Clear communication between the family, parish and caregivers is necessary to ensure the sick receive timely spiritual attention. It is so important to seek the sacrament long before imminent death, in hopes that the person is conscious enough to participate in the grace of the sacrament and that the priest can discern how best to provide spiritual comfort and last rites if necessary.

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